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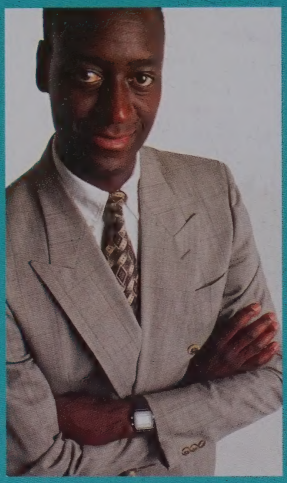

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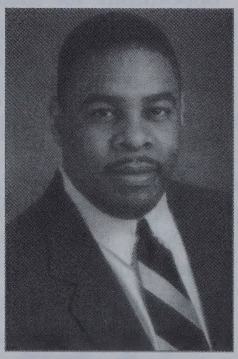

Michael Marks: President of Mississippi Association of Educators

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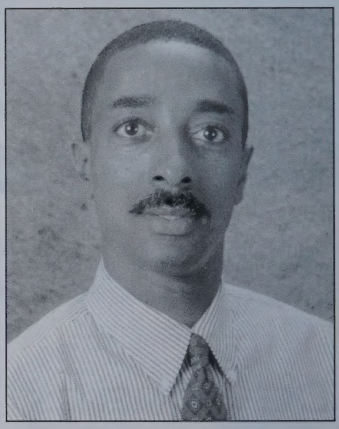

Maurice Singleton

Whose responsibility is it to provide a young person with the fundamentals to succeed in life?

Two conversations I have been involved in during the past month have at least begged this question. The first conversation occurred at a wedding reception. A man approximately fifty years of age adamantly argued that the opportunity for success is "out there" and that young people "need to go get it! It's there for them! They just need to go get it!" He went on to make a point that the reason young people aren't succeeding is because they are having babies too young and are not prepared to adequately support the development of their children as previous generations of parents have done.

The other conversation was at a popular hamburger restaurant. A young lady recognized me, and told me that she was "tired" of her job and inquired about any job openings that I might have. "I'm serious!" she exclaimed. "I hate what I'm doing."

I asked her what type of work she was interested in doing, and she replied, "Anything. I'll do just about anything except what I'm doing now. I just hate what I'm doing."

I asked her if she had ever taken a career interest survey or a career exploration class or assessment. She hadn't, so I suggested to her to go to one of the area community colleges and talk with a counselor who would work with her to help discover what might be a possible career for her.

She was unaware that such a service was even available. Her friend affirmed that she had gone through something similar at one of the community colleges that I had suggested. "I'm going to check into that!" she jubilantly replied.

"Let me know how it goes," I told her.

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I certainly don't believe that this young lady's problems were solved that day, but surely this could have been the beginning of something positive, provided this young lady goes and talk with a career counselor and begins to pursue a recommended career interest.

As the man in the first conversation told me, it is the responsibility of parents to prepare children for success, and obviously, the schools play a critical role, but each of us - throughout the village - should feel some responsibility when the system fails. We can't afford to say, "Too bad!" "You had your chance, but you failed."

We can't afford to compare the children of today with ourselves when we were their ages. It's a different time and a different world. Children today have different problems, different challenges, different needs. We can't ever give up on them. We must help them to overcome whatever problems or challenges they face.

If we don't have the solutions, we must help young people find answers and solutions to their questions, challenges and problems. No, we can't do the work for them, but we must help get them to get on the right track.

Sometimes, a simple conversation may help a young person solve what may have seemed like a big problem to them. It may take a phone call or it may even take driving someone to meet with a counselor or teacher to get that young person on the right track. Whatever it takes, we the village have got to do what we must do.

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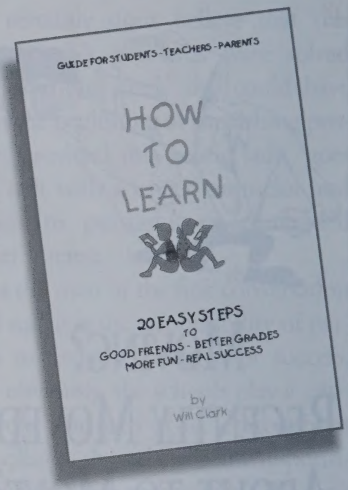
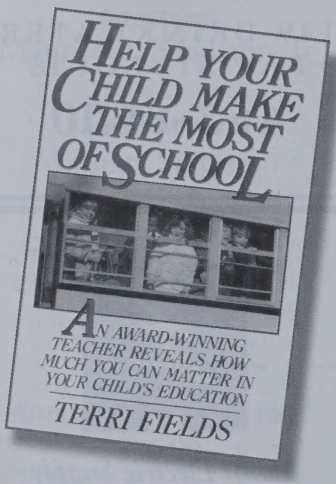
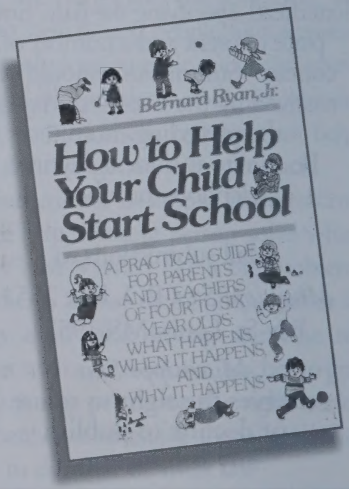

GUIDE FOR STUDENTS - TEACHERS - PARENTS
HOW TO LEARN
20 EASY STEPS TO GOOD FRIENDS - BETTER GRADES MORE FUN - REAL SUCCESS
by Will Clark

How To Learn: 20 Easy Steps to Good Friends - Better Grades - More Fun - Real Success (Friends of Education, Southaven, Mississippi, 1995). Author Will Clark provides students, teachers and parents with a systematic and simplistic approach to learning and succeeding.

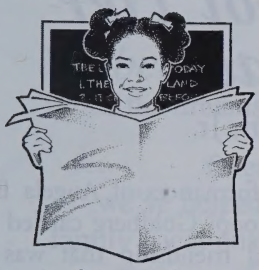

HELP YOUR CHILD MAKE THE MOST OF SCHOOL
AN AWARD-WINNING TEACHER REVEALS HOW MUCH YOU CAN MATTER IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION
TERRI FIELDS

Help Your Child Make the Most of School (Random House, Inc. 1987). Award-winning teacher Terri Fields discusses recommended roles and responsibilities of parents in the school and in producing an environment for children to succeed.


Bernard Ryan, Jr.
How to Help Your Child Start School
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS OF FOUR TO SIX YEAR OLDS
WHAT HAPPENS, WHEN IT HAPPENS AND WHY IT HAPPENS

How to Help Your Child Start School (Soundview Books, 1980) Bernard Ryan Jr. talks about the social and developmental goals of kindergarten and distinguishes between real and perceived expectations of parents. His breakdown of what happens with these students is excellent.

READING...



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REVIEW: *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*

by Maurice Singleton, Jr.

How Stella Got Her Groove Back - the movie - was a great experience. Yes, it was an experience. For the first time in quite a while, I went to a movie on the first night of its release. And that made for quite an experience.

For one thing, I didn't go there with any of the prejudices of hearing all the different opinions you hear from friends about how "good", "bad", or "so-so" the movie might have been. Certainly, I heard the famous TV critics degrading reviews of Stella. And yes, I consider "C+" degrading. To me Stella was more a B+ or A- film. And obviously, many of the people who were in attendance of the sold out premiere showing at United Artist Theaters in Biloxi thought the same thing.

It's going to be interesting to hear the feedback of audiences across the country because the film enjoyed an incredible first weekend, finishing second at the box office, behind Saving Private Ryan. I didn't hear the dollar figures, but to finish second was an incredible feat, considering the weekend's other new and recently released films, including The Avengers, Snake Eyes, Negotiator and The Parent Trap.

People laughed, cheered and chuckled throughout the movie. The performances of Angela Basset and Whoopi Goldberg carried off a bi-coastal friendship that was real, inspiring, uplifting and quite entertaining. And let me also say perfectly cast! Their chemistry is incredibly inviting.

The story of forty-year-old Stella falling in love with a young man half her age is like one critic referred to as, "cute." But, Winston is cool. He's mature, smart and good looking. He's a man. He's responsible. He has so many good qualities. If you're like me and you have sons, you say: "Okay, I can deal with this." "Maybe he'll grow out of this." "This will pass."

And that's probably how the father of Winston, played by Glynn Turman appears to handle the situation.

The relationships between Stella and her two sisters also makes for interesting interactions and exchanges.

When I go to the movies, I primarily go to be entertained. I also expect to learn something, laugh a little and have a good time. Stella does all these things and more. This movie inspires dreams of better friendships, improved careers and generally speaking, a better way of life.

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Michael Marks Begins Second Year as Mississippi Association of Educators President

Schizophrenic: That's how President Michael Marks describes his first year at the helm of the state's largest teacher group, The Mississippi Association of Educators (MAE). "In a typical day I could go from a high level budget meeting with the lieutenant governor in the morning, to sitting on the floor eating tuna fish with fourth graders in the evening." The 22-year educator adds, "This job is definitely a diverse one!"

Michael Marks

The former Hattiesburg High School coach of drama and debate is settling in for the second year of his first term of office as the elected spokesperson for public education. He was inaugurated August 1, 1997, as the first African American male to serve as president of the 10,000 member organization. During his tenure, MAE was a major architect in drafting language for the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, The Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act of 1998 and The Catastrophic Leave Act. MAE also cosponsors the statewide faculty meeting for teachers interested in the nationwide board certification process. This fall Marks plans a series of regional forums dealing with school violence. In addition to lobbying for legislation and providing training for teachers. President Marks also instituted future educator scholarships for potential Mississippi teachers and led the charge

for reading sufficiency in Mississippi schools. "Sponsoring the statewide Read Across America Program proved to be a success. The project provided a vehicle for educators to network with PTA and other Civic groups across the Magnolia State in order to promote lifelong reading."

Marks has called upon his theatre background, reading to over 5000 students this year. "Studies show that children who read outside of school do better in school. I want to do my part to encourage good reading habits at an early age."

Marks, a Southern Mississippi alum, has literally crisscrossed the country this year as Mississippi's official representative at educational conferences. Meeting Vice President Al Gore and Congressman Richard Gephardt were political highlights in his first year. The state organization, an affiliate of the National Education Association, works to elect friends of children and public education. "I am extremely proud of the coalitions that we have built." He notes the bipartisan support for public education now as evidence in the Mississippi Senate and House of Representatives.

Marks' main work brings Mississippi's classrooms to center stage. "As a drama teacher, I have been a part of some pretty high profile student showcases, both in Hattiesburg and abroad. The best performances, however, are going on everyday in our classrooms. Sometimes in the face of great odds our teachers are doing a fantastic job preparing our youngsters for the millennium and beyond."

> "Our children are the most important resources we have. We must demand excellence of them so that they exit our schools equipped to meet the opportunities of life."

In between ongoing visits to school districts and countless public speaking and media engagements, the former Mississippi Teacher of the Year finds time to do volunteer work for the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi, the Mississippi Arts Alliance and to satisfy his love for the stage, he is preparing the new Miss Mississippi for the talent competition at the upcoming Miss America Pageant.

Although Marks knows that his state work is important, he still gets homesick for Hattiesburg. There is no remedy for that in sight as the Hattiesburg Association of Educators (HAE) recently nominated him to seek another two-

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year term, a campaign they will help him run during the coming months. Says HAE President Eleanor Harris, "We are proud of Michael's work. He is indicative of all the good teachers in The Hattiesburg Public Schools District."

Apparently, many of Marks' cohorts nationwide also think he's doing a good job. During the national convention, the NEA Black Caucus elected him as director of the Southeastern States. "The post will allow me to focus on Special needs of the urban and minority child. MAE remains committed to quality education for all children in our state."

"It's been a busy year but a fine one," Marks admits. The former Lumberton and Perry County educator acknowledges tough times ahead for public educators. "Our children are the most important resources we have. We must demand excellence of them so that they exit our schools equipped to meet the opportunities of life."

Marks sets a good example for demanding teachers. One of his disciplined actors was just cast on the television soap, All My Children, and a former debater is clerking with The Supreme Court. He concludes, "Life couldn't get any better."

Michael Marks

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Pass Christian Mother is Missi

by Maurice E. Singleton, Jr.

This year has been one of surprises and recognition for Mary L. Conway of Pass Christian. The mother of six was named Mississippi's 1998 NAACP Mother of the Year. This honor was preceded by her receiving another honor - Mother of the Year for the Gulfport Branch of the NAACP.

NAACP's Mother of the Year Mary Conway with her husband Earl. They will celebrate their 37th anniversary this month.

"I didn't know that many people cared about me or my children," Mrs. Conway explained. "The children did most of it. They had more friends who could afford to buy a hundred dollar ad than I do."

The Mother of the Year Contest is a fund-raising program that many of the local branches of the NAACP adopt. Local winners go on to participate in the state event.

"They told me that I was going to be Mother of the Year," Mrs. Conway said of the encouragement she received from her children. "I told them that it was not a sure thing, and I told them that they know that I work, so if I had to raise money to win, they were going to have to help me."

Mrs. Conway said that she was excited about participating, but she admitted that the chance of winning didn't really phase her until a few days before the local event. "It really didn't phase me until the last week when the money was beginning to flow in.

"I said this is really like politics. I didn't know the other lady, and I didn't know what she had turned in. When they announced the winner, it really surprised me. I was hoping to win, but I wasn't sure I was going to win. My children nominated me and they helped me, and my church (St. Paul's AME Church in Gulfport) was behind me. They were behind me one hundred percent."

ppi's NAACP Mother of the Year

The Conway Family: (front row left to right): Earl Trounce Conway, Sr., Mary Louise Conway, Warren Leon Conway; (back row) Earl Trounce Conway, Jr., Shinall Tremell Conway, Leonard Joseph Conway, Wanda LaVern Conway, Rodney Jerome Conway.

Mrs. Conway said that her winning was a concerted effort of her children, her church, co-workers, businesses and people in the community. Donations came in all amounts.

"The amount didn't really matter to me because $2.00 could make a $100 if you put enough of them there," explained Mrs. Conway. "I don't really know how much money I raised. People were still turning in donations after the event."

"If we didn't win, it wasn't going to be because the other side had outworked us," said Warren L. Conway, Mrs. Conway's eldest child and an attorney in Gulfport. Warren and his five siblings called on friends and business associates and raised more money than any other contestant in the state.

"We all knew that she has been a wonderful mother to us and we felt that she deserved the recognition of being a mother of mothers," Warren

explained.

The skills of organization and discipline that were important to the mother as she worked three jobs for nineteen years while raising her children had become characteristic traits of the children. Mrs. Conway helped them, but her six children - all adults now - took charge, just like "Mom" had done for them when they were children.

"They knew that at the time we were raising them that it was hard," Mrs. Conway attempted to explain the motivation of the support she received from her children. "They knew it was a struggle for us.

"It was a lot things they needed - not wanted. Needed! But did not get," she remembered some of the sacrifices that had to be made to keep the family going. "And they were good children, too. I didn't have any problems with those kids. The problems people have nowadays: I don't know how I would've dealt with it.

"If I said 'do this', they may not do it when I said 'do it', but it would get done," she explained. "If they went to a football game, I didn't have to go check to make sure that's where they went. I knew where they were going.

"Another thing," she added. "I use to transport my children a lot. If they had somewhere to go, I made sure they got there. I took them there and I made sure to pick them up. You never knew what might happen. I knew they needed guidance. And once they went off to college, I hoped that I had instilled enough self respect in them that they would go off and be gentlemen and my daughter would be a young lady." Mrs. Conway admits that although her children were good kids, some of them did challenge the boundaries she had set for them as they were growing up. "Two of them would slip off sometimes. The first day I went to look for them and brought them back home. The second time it happened I had to tight'em up a little. Then I didn't have to be bothered with that any more.

"I didn't send my children to church. I took them and stayed there with them. We would sometimes argue about it being too long. Everybody would be hungry, but that was alright. They went."

"I believe in disciplining a child; I don't believe in abusing children," she explained. "I put the belt on them. I put it on their backsides, not on their faces."

"When I brought them back the

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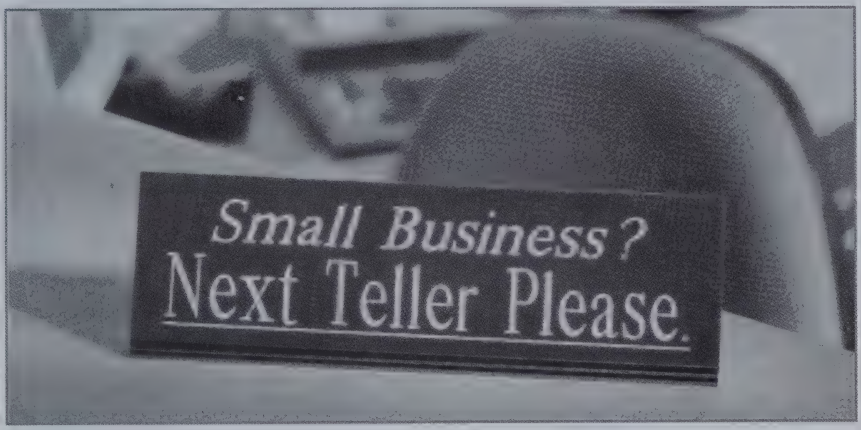

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Grandaughter, Shara Sherese, and daughter, Wanda, enjoy a moment of celebration with newly crowned Gulfport NAACP Mother of the Year.

second time, they started calling me 'bounty hunter'. And they still call me a bounty hunter."

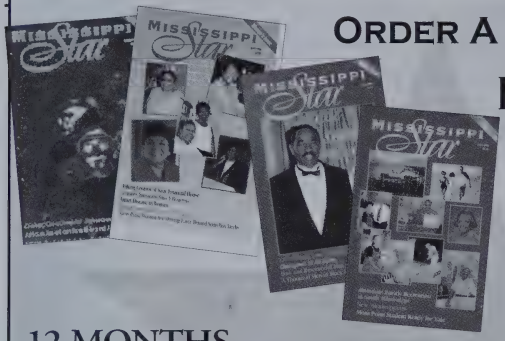
Calling their mother "bounty hunter" is obviously an affectionate tease she gets, especially from the boys. But there is no teasing about the appreciation they feel about there mother's commitment to them and her example of keeping the course in spite of much struggle.

"We are very proud of her," said Warren of his mother's ambition and hard work towards completing a college degree in 1977 from Tougaloo College while working three jobs and always being there for the children. Although there was a great deal of sacrifice and time spent away from the children, there was little sacrificing when it came to time for the evening meal.

"I made mine sit at the table," Mrs. Conway recalled. "I worked, but while I fixed my dinner in the evening, I made them sit at the table and do their homework. I had some that weren't reading very well, and I made them read out loud to me."

Her strategy paid off. Four have college degrees. All six children are successful and productive citizens. Earl is a stock broker in Denver, Colorado; Leonard is making a career as a merchant seaman. Shinall works in the law office with Warren; Rodney is in construction work with his dad; and Wanda, who recently completed her master's degree, is a school teacher. Warren, Earl and Shinall played football at Mississippi College.

This fall, Mrs. Conway will start a new position in her thirty-second year at Headstart. She will be a Family



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The Conway Grandchildren: Warren Williams Conway, Shara Sherese Conway, Leonard Joseph Conway II, Sadé Simone Conway, Austin Preston Conway and Chaquilla Kennedy (not pictured)

Service Worker. She hasn't seriously considered retiring because she loves her work and she realizes her impact.

"You see a child come in to you who can't walk well yet, a little toddler," she reflects. "And you see them leave out of there and they can tell you a whole lot that really would surprise you. They can tell you about nature, their names and telephone numbers. You can really see their progress. It gives you a great feeling.

"At one time I wanted to become a nurse, but there was too much pain in that for me," she explained. "I could see a lot of joy in working with children, and that is what I chose to do. I love working with children. There is nothing I enjoy doing better than this."

What advice does Mrs. Conway have for young parents?

"You raise them the way you want them to grow up. And you've got to keep them in church. Now they may leave church, but if they have enough instilled in them, they'll eventually get back there.

"That's a firm belief that I have," she explains. "I didn't send my children to church. I took them and stayed there with them. We would sometimes argue about it being too long. Everybody would be hungry, but that was alright. They went. And now they're involved in church. They're leaders in the church. I sit back and watch them now, and I'm very proud of them."

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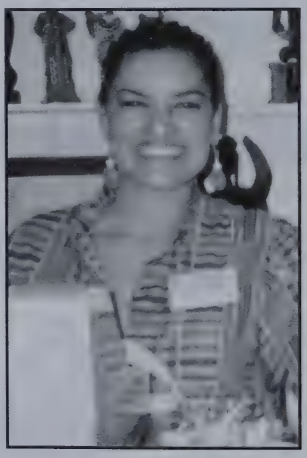
Ebony and Ivory Images A Showcase of Sisters Working Together

"Sisters Working Together" is the theme for a unique specialty store that opened in Gulfport recently. Ebony and Ivory Images is a showcase of the expertise, creativeness and special talents of seven very talented Gulf Coast area women. The result is a colorful display of art, figurines, clothing, hats, greeting cards and books.

Velma Barker



Sheena Kennedy

The seed from which Ebony and Ivory Images has grown was first planted in the heart and soul of **Velma Barker** seven years ago. During a discussion on what they wanted to be for Halloween, a little black girl said that she wanted to be a queen. The little girl was told by a little white boy that she couldn't be a queen because there were no black queens. Velma made it a point to bring black art into the classroom so that all of the children could see African-American culture. In the process, the little girl and the little boy learned that there are many black queens. Last November Velma and her daughter's grandmother, Geraldine Nunter Williams put together a Minority Business Expo. The turnout was so overwhelming that Mrs. Williams envisioned Velma in a building large enough for Velma and other small businesses coming together in what she called an incubator. This would be a place where resources would be pooled to support and strengthen everyone.

Several of the women of Ebony and Ivory Images

were conducting their businesses out of their homes. Some of them had worked together at various functions setting up displays in the community for Kwanzaa, Black Business Expo's, churches and other community events. They were ready to take part in the idea inspired by Williams and Barker.

Dora Faison

Sheena Kennedy creates some of the most beautiful ceramic art on the Coast. Inspired by a ceramic little girl doll she received as a gift. Sheena, along with her mother, Fredericka Jacobs, began taking art classes. This resulted in the two of them making ceramic pieces for family and friends, which led to many requests for their handiwork. Two years ago, Sheena and Fredericka formed their own business, using Sheena's home as their headquarters. Sheena is also an administrative assistant at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Gulfport.

Dora Faison, a native of Alabama and resident of the Gulf Coast for

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many years, discovered an opportunity when she found it difficult to find positive "Black" greeting cards to send friends and relatives. Dora identified sources for cards she would send for birthdays, holidays and other special occasions. She received a lot of complimentary feedback from friends and relatives about the cards she had sent to them For the past year, Dora has been selling greeting cards, African statues, masks and greeting cards. Dora is an educator employed in the Biloxi Public School System.

Ethel Shaw

Ethel Shaw first began to consider opening her own business in June of 1995. She has a background in fashion merchandising and is a certified bra and prostheses fitter. In May of 1997, the mother of six and grandmother of fourteen, started her own business, Fashion Touch Boutique, Nail and

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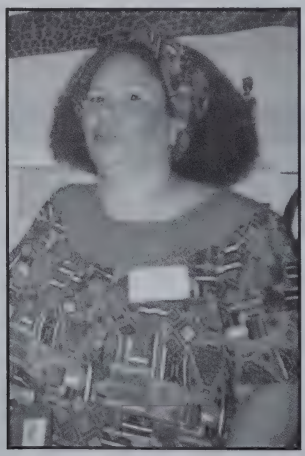
Beauty Salon in Gulfport. She met the other six ladies at different shows and decided to join them in opening Ebony and Ivory Images. Ethel worked at Gayfers for twenty-nine years before she retired because of a chronic health condition.

Sandra Allen

A native of New Orleans, **Sandra Allen** has been sewing since when she was in high school -- but only for family and friends. Four years ago, a close friend gave her a piece of mud cloth for Kwanzaa. Sandra used the cloth to make a hat. Whenever she wore the hat, people complimented her work. She has been making hats, vests and other handmade items ever since. When Sandra is not at her sewing machine or on duty at Pass Christian Elementary, she can be found at Gulfside Assembly in Waveland sharing her gifts of laughter and joy.

Sherry Kimble



Judy Whitfield

Sherry Kimble began creating jewelry for herself. Before long, church members, friends and everyone she came in contact with were talking about her one-of-a-kind creations. That was the beginning of Juni Anne Creations. Sherry's jewelry and hats can only be classified as works of art. All of her pieces are created using cowrie shells and natural gems. Her hats are uniquely designed for those who would "Dare to Wear" them.

Judy Whitfield is a writer and poet. Women on the Gulf Coast are familiar with her poem, *Sisters,* which she sells in the form of tee shirts and decoupage frames. Judy is also known for her Afro-centric clothing. "Folks are always asking me where I get my African clothes - especially during February - when it's okay to be Black. So I decided to start making clothing to sell."

Judy, who believes that everything has a spiritual connection, sees the formation of the Ebony and Ivory Images sisterhood as a divine inspiration that can only be a blessing to the African American Community. "There are seven principles of Kwanzaa and seven women in the sisterhood. The principles are: Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Familyhood and Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity and Faith. The concept of Ebony and Ivory Images embodies all seven of these principles. The result can only be success."

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CLASS HOLDS 50TH REUNION

Five Members of the St. Rose de Lima 1948 Graduating Class stand in front of tree class members planted to pay tribute to the impact the school had on their lives and the many memories they hold when they were students. Standing from left, Andrew Lizana, August Hazeur, Patricia Johnson, Ed Lewis and Norman Smith. The high school closed in 1968.

WAVELAND ARTIST RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS GRANT

Joseph A. Pearson was selected by the Board of Directors of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation to receive a grant to serve as a positive boost for his artistic endeavors during the coming year. Pearson was selected for the grant largely because of the exceptional quality of the work which he submitted to the the foundation. Pearson's work can be found at Serenity in downtown Bay St. Louis. A mural featuring world renowned sculptor, Richmond Barte' can also be found in downtown Bay St. Louis.

FOUR HANCOCK COUNTY YOUNG MEN RECEIVE EAGLE SCOUT RECOGNITION

Larry Kagler, Ben Taylor, Rhett Magnon and Adam Frierson received their Eagle Scout pins in a ceremony at the Bay St. Louis Depot in May.

Guest Word

Preparing Young People for their Futures

by Gwen H. Lawyer

Gwen H. Lawyer

Parents should be aware of the career choices of their children. Whether or not the child is going to college, parents can help the child formulate a plan to reach goals and to become successful.

If the child aspires to attend college, it is imperative that the child and his/her parents sit down and map out a plan and schedule, particularly during the senior year when final academic preparation is concluding. The number of student activities tend to increase during the senior year which can add stress to a challenging academic work load as well as college planning.

Certainly, succeeding in the classroom is important, and so is a healthy social life. But so is managing the college application process. Adhering to college application, financial aid and housing deadlines are critical. The way to successfully handle the many responsibilities that college-bound seniors confront is to map out a plan.

I recommend The College Information and Planning Guide which provides students and parents with a recommended month-to-month planning schedule. It tells you what needs to be done each month and serves as a checklist. It even includes recommendations for appropriate times to visit college campuses. And parents shouldn't underestimate visits to college campuses. A great deal can be learned by visiting college campuses. The condition of buildings, the pride students have for their school, and the general attitudes of faculty and staff can tell you a lot about the general reputation of the school.

Also, be sure to talk with graduates of the college and any students or former students of the college or university. They can provide you with very valuable information about the school's reputation and commitment to students.

Many students formulate ideas about what they want to do after high school, how they are going to secure finances for college, and search for jobs. Many others would wait until the last minute and find themselves not knowing what they were going to do and settle for whatever

comes.

We are facing a more and more competitive work place that demands specialization. Students who plan their futures will be more apt to achieve success.

All students are not going to college. For these students the service industry offers many opportunities. This is particularly true in South Mississippi which has been significantly impacted by the casino and hotel industries.

All students can benefit from planning. Whether your goals will take you to college, the military or if you are going to begin working after high school, planning can increase your chances for success. And the sooner you start thinking about your future the better off you will be.

Gwen H. Lawyer is director of the Career Center at Pass Christian High School. The Tougaloo graduate and native of Jackson is in her twenty-fifth year in the education and development of young people. The Career Center at Pass Christian High School begins the process of helping students identify their career paths in the ninth grade. The Career Center is open to students and the Pass Christian community.

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Calendar

Walter O. Evans Collection of African American Art

August 15 - October 25
Walter Anderson Museum of Art
Ocean Springs, MS

Author Kitty Weaver Book Signing

August 29
Book: "Thank God My Regiment An African One"
Fort Massachusetts, Ship Island
2:00 p.m.
Contact: 1-800-388-3290

NAACP Regular Monthly Meetings

Hancock County Branch

2nd Tuesday
St. Rose de Lima Catholic Church

Gulfport Branch

1st Monday
Isiah Fredericks Community Center

Biloxi Branch

4th Thursday
Branch Office - Main Street

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